

## Max and Jane by Discreetly

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**Summary:** Max plopped onto the couch, jostling her neighbor. "So," Max said. Jane glanced at her, then turned back to the television. "Sooooooo..." Max dragged the word out, hoping for something - anything out of the other girl. Jane didn't respond, her eyes were set forward.

## Max and Jane

Max plopped onto the couch, jostling her neighbor.

"So," Max said.

Jane glanced at her, then turned back to the television.

"Sooooooo..." Max dragged the word out, hoping for something - anything out of the other girl.

Jane didn't respond, her eyes were set forward. On the television screen, a magician was performing his art. Making cards disappear and reappear, summoning birds from his hat and telling all the funny jokes that everybody laughed at. Jane considered her career options.

"So," Max said again. And then, with no other choice, she added, "You like TV, huh?"

Jane blinked. Rotated her head a full 90 degrees, met Max's eyes and replied: "Yes."

"Oh, cool. Me, too." Max pressed her lips together into something resembling a smile. "I've never watched this show before, but uh, it's cool. Lots of neat magic tricks."

Jane looked back at the screen. "Tricks?" she asked.

"Yeah, they're not *really* making stuff vanish or whatever. They're just doing sneaky stuff like slipping the card up their sleeve. Or keeping the birds trapped in their pocket."

"The birds are *trapped*?" Jane asked.

"Well, yeah," Max said, "How else do you expect..." Her voice trailed off, her usual smartassery did not apply with Jane. And Jane was currently staring at her, mouth agape with horror.

*Back up, Max. Don't freak the psychic out.* "Uh, they get set free, though. The magician lets them fly at the end so it's all okay."

"Hm. The birds get trapped. But then they get set free. So it's all okay..." Jane frowned, she looked back at the television, no longer with quiet awe. She tilted her head and the channel jumped to another. A talk show host talking to a movie star. It was stupid and pointless, but overall inoffensive.

For a while, the two girls stared at the screen, allowing the meaningless words spouted out from the speakers to wash out everything else. But for Max, they were more of a white background noise than something to fill the head.

*Idiot!* she thought, *You're messing this up!*

Max heaved a sigh out. "I'm sorry."

Jane didn't reply.

"Hey, come on. I said I was sorry. I was just trying to... talk with you. Sorry if I said something stupid."

Jane flicked her head to the left, the channel went to a show in space with men and women in colorful spandex uniforms.

But Max wasn't paying attention to the screen, her focus was on Jane. The girl was *totally* ignoring her. Like did she think that Max would not know what was happening here.

"Fine." Max crossed her arms and slid into the corner of couch furthest from Jane. "Be that way."

Another extended silence. Jane didn't see fit to change the channel and Max didn't care either way. But the truth was, neither were paying any attention at all to the screen.

Jane spoke up first - for the first time in all their one-way "conversations".

"Why?" she asked suddenly.

Max looked over at Jane, eyebrow raised. "Why, what?"

"Why do you want to talk with me?"

"What, am I not allowed to talk with you? Is that reserved for Mike only?"

"No." Jane thought for a moment. "You're allowed to talk to me."

"Oh well, thanks for the permission," Max replied.

Jane frowned. She knew what sarcasm was and she knew when she was being mocked. It was annoying, but in this instance, it wasn't important.

"So, why then?"

"What?"

Jane sighed a little. "Why do you want talk with me?"

Max rolled her eyes, uncrossed her arms, crossed them again. She seemed caught between two snappy comebacks, unable to say either.

Jane waited very patiently.

Max's cheeks turned red, camouflaging her freckles. She muttered something incomprehensible.

"What did you say?" Jane asked. Psychic powers did not mean super-hearing. Not in this case, at least.

Max grumbled. Then in a voice only slightly louder: "I just think you're cool."

"What?"

Max threw her hands up and shouted, "I said I think you're really cool!"

Jane blinked at her. "I'm cool?"

"Uhhh. *Yeah*," Max said, "You're probably the coolest person I've met... ever."

A tinge of red started to touch Jane's cheeks in turn. "Oh," she said, "Thanks."

"Yeah, you're kind of a badass and there's also the fact that..." Max didn't finish her sentence, her cheeks turned even redder. "Nevermind," she said quickly, "I just think you're cool."

There was something unsaid there. Jane stared at the red-headed girl.

"What is it?"

"Nothing, forget it."

"Max," Jane said, "Friends don't lie."

Max put her hands to her face, rolled her eyes and groaned at the skies. That little motto was just so lame, so stupid and so damn persistent. Now that Jane had said it, Max couldn't shake it. As dumb as it was, there was something so pure to the words - something Max could not deny.

"Fine," Max said, "It'll sound stupid if I say it and you'll probably laugh. Ugh, I can't believe I'm listening to that dumb code." Max sucked in a deep breath and then answered with one exhale, "It's just that you're cool and I want to be your friend. And you would be my first friend - that is a girl."

Jane stared at her.

Max waved her hands between the two of them. "You would be my first friend that is also a girl."

"A girl friend," Jane said.

"Ugh, *no*," Max said, sticking out her tongue, "Not like doing each other's hair or talking about boys all the time or anything stupid like that. I just wish I had a friend that was a girl. Like, I like Lucas and Mike and Will and Dustin, but..." Max sighed. "Sometimes you need to hang out with other girls, you know what I mean?"

Jane thought about it for a moment. Not a long one.

"Yes," she said, "I know *exactly* what you mean."

"Cool. You get it, I knew you would." Max paused. "So..." she eyed

Jane for a long second.

"What?"

"Do you want to be friends?"

Jane smiled. "Yes."

Max grinned. "Awesome."